

Joseph Montgomery: Artist's Statement

I had a painter friend come by the studio in the fall of 2020. After I had performed my usual choreography - hang a work, chat about a work, take down a work - the dance had shuffled 33 paintings across the walls. My friend by the end said, you are teaching yourself how to make a good painting through the paintings you are making. I thought I had been showing her good paintings. She was expecting the pursuit of a masterpiece. I do not chase masterpieces in the studio.

There is a vast space around painting in which its fundamental elements orbit. Defying the gravitational pull of the single painting, I am examining those orbits of influence and momentum that are the pieces of painting. I want to scatter the viewer's gaze toward those heavy satellites. Consider the ground; consider the 3rd dimension; consider inherited color; consider photography; consider the interstitial.

In circling around making a good painting I see myself being generous to painting's biography. And by running counter to expectations of the pursuit of a masterpiece I can sharpen my convictions—the relativity of the image and the importance of its ground.

Peanuts' Pigpen is known by his marks, the dirt, circling his head and body, an effervescent cloud of contagious smudges on paper. Would Pigpen still be the same character if he were dispossessed of this dirt, his stains, the orbiting gestures of his naming? Pigpen Dispossessed is a show about such a scenario and introduces myself in these terms. The exhibition's paintings are a sample of each of my generative genres—shim, collage, monotype— and hang in a line around the gallery. A continuous loop, the painting installation orbits the viewer and allows them to choose a beginning or an end but not a hierarchy of means.